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take you br
bIe a t h



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Featuring New and
Continued Stories By

RICHARD CORBEN
TOM GRINDBERG
HILDEBRANDT BROS.
ALEX HORLEY
JOE JUSKO
ELIO LEONE
JAMES ROBINSON
CHARLES VESS

Issue #3

With
An Original
Story By
NEIL GAIMAN
Illustrated By
TONY DANIEL



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ALIVE!



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D-TRON
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Spirit of the

TAO #1

D-TRON, BILLY TAN, TEAM-TRON, JONATHAN D. SMITH

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A Letter From The Publishers

We'd like to extend our thanks to everyone who was responsible for making issue #1 a resounding success. This second issue brings you even more of the world's greatest creators all united in one magazine. Inside you will find sequential stories from fantasy legends such as Moebius, The Hildebrandt Brothers and Larry Elmore, an exciting Battle Chasers storyline from red-hot comic artist Joe Madureira and a thought provoking historical retrospective from Tony Harris. Also featured are two stories from fantastic writer Eric Leone illustrated by Alex Horley and Tom Grindberg and a preview of Alan Dean Foster's upcoming novel *Carnivores Of Light And Darkness*.

Our next issue will hit the stands in August featuring continuations of the Joe Jusko and Richard Corben stories from issue #1, continuations of the Hildebrandt Brothers' creation as well as the two captivating Eric Leone stories seen in this issue, plus all new stories from Neil Gaiman, Charles Vess and James Robinson. As with every issue, the August edition will feature another one of Frank Frazetta's timeless masterpieces on the cover.

Most importantly, we'd like to thank Frank Frazetta, the grand master of fantasy illustration, for being the heart of this magazine and for setting the standard of quality in each and every issue. We hope that you enjoy this issue and feel the emotion poured into every page by each of the fantastic artists involved. By the way, producing issue #1 was a blast! The pictures below were taken in the middle of the print run at hmmm...let's say 4am?



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FRANK FRAZETTA FAINTASY ILLUSTRATED

Summer 1998 • Volume 1, Number 2

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"Kane on the Golden Sea"

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TODD McFARLANE'S

SPAWN

THE WAR BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL
CONTINUES...

FRIDAY, MAY 15TH, MIDNIGHT **HBO**

IT'S NOT TV. IT'S HBO.

www.hbo.com/spawn ©1998 Home Box Office, a division of Time Warner Entertainment Company L.P. All rights reserved. In the event of a tie, the first tie-breaker will be used.

KANE ON THE GOLDEN SEA

The first major exhibition of Frazetta's art was held at the Penn-Stroud hotel in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. The year was 1977 and Frank's wife, Elie, brought a fresh wet oil to the exhibit as a special surprise. That oil was *Kane On The Golden Sea*.

Everyone in attendance was awe-struck and honored to see it first. This work is an unqualified masterpiece and clearly displays Frazetta's command of gesture as the heart of a composition. Everything flows from the imposing figure of Kane imperiously staring into the horizon. His figure is rock solid, yet wonderfully expressive. Kane's character is etched in that geometry of muscle; a hard world requires hard muscle to survive, to prevail. His intimidating right arm is brilliantly handled, taut, suffused with emotion, the prospect of battle has energized every muscle. The slightly raised finger is a virtuoso touch, indicating an eager tension, ready for action. Surrounding Kane the other elements reinforce the mood: a beautifully textured billowing sail, rapidly darkening skies, and magically tinted seas that presage the wonders ahead. The screaming demon on the prow is a metaphor for Kane's soul - a hellish scream for battle. In this one composition, Frazetta combines the monumentality of Michelangelo, the subtlety of Raphael, and the black vision of Goya.

There are no secret potions, paints, or exotic instruments responsible for Frazetta's magic. He begins with an idea, sometimes that idea comes directly from a text. Frazetta demands a wide creative latitude for his interpretation of content and imagery. A small pencil drawing is sketched. If appropriate, Frazetta adds a bit of watercolor to this sketch to give it full form and to observe the effects of light. Often, even this coloring process is unnecessary and Frazetta moves directly to the easel, relying on his intuitive sense of color correctness.

Frazetta paints with thin applications of oil mixed with a drying agent. Broad areas of color and broad lines are gradually made even more precise. Frazetta prefers to keep his inspiration fresh by avoiding photo reference and other crutches. Frazetta is the definition of the creative artist, he outthinks everyone and outdraws everyone. He has no peer. Frazetta is a living national treasure.

Dr. David Wintewicz





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It is a time when chaos and order fight for supremacy. A time when frightened men huddle around their fires telling stories, that though terrible and fantastic, are true.

This is the time when legends wander across the land and death may sweep from the sky on terrible wings.

There are a few who are supreme. They are the beings of great renown. They are the purveyors of unspeakable horrors.

They are the mighty...

They are the ancient...

They are the...



Art Elmore
Story: Larry Elmore & Kevin Clark

FALLEN



The ancient beast wasn't
killing for food or necessity.



Its ability to cause terror and death
eases the unnatural cravings of
the unnatural creature.



He knows she's there...



It was killing, purely for the pleasure it derives
from the pain inflicted on things weaker and
less powerful than itself.

DAMN...



Now she will come.



WHEREVER I
GO, IT'S
ALWAYS THE
SAME

MORE LIFE
SENSELESSLY
EXTINISHED



KETHRAHN
OF ALL MY BROTHERS,
ONLY HE CONSORTS
WITH DRAGONS

AND THAT
GREAT RED IS
HIS SCALY
BEAST...



AND IT WILL KILL
NO MORE THIS DAY

In the early days, when she and her brethren were first cast upon this earth, the deaths of mortals had no meaning. They were mere chattel to be used and cast away. Their suffering was of no concern to her, because she could not see beyond the light of her beauty.

Once she saw past his light and into the shadows, the revelation of the nature of the beast became apparent. The writhing horrid ugliness of evil in its purest form was exposed.

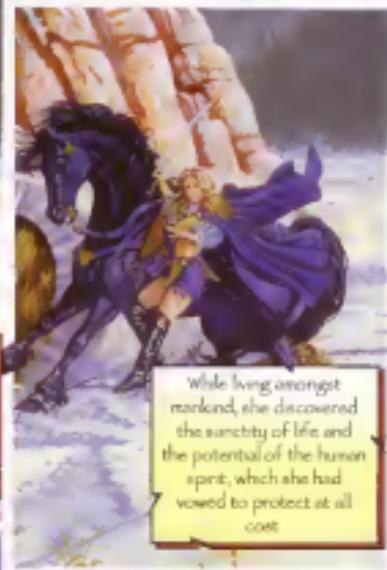
He was the fairest in the mortal world. His brightness shone as the morning star hiding the darkness lingering beneath. They followed as awestruck children not knowing until too late that they had been deceived. She and a few others realized that they had become destroyers of life and all that was good.



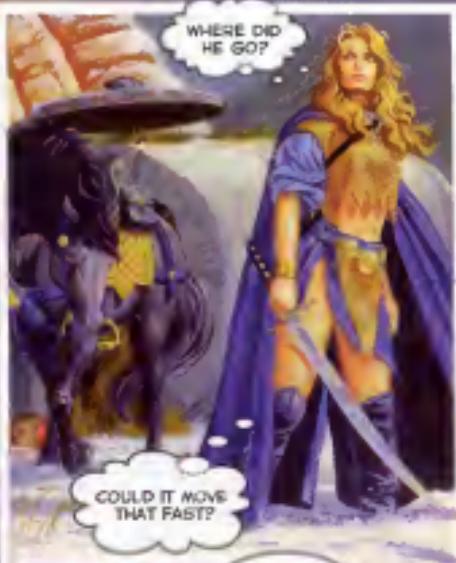
Then came a parting between the fallen. She was not the first to see through the deceptions and lies, nor was she the first to part to him. Though the parting, for her, was more difficult, she was his right arm, his sword; she was the closest to his light.



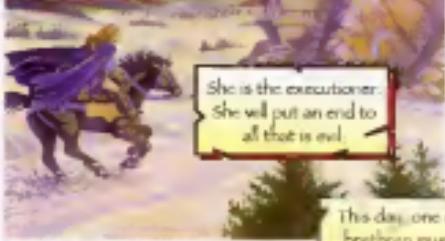
Those that departed from him sought their own darkness, each in their own way. Over time the evil of her past weighed heavily on her heart.



While living amongst mankind, she discovered the sanctity of life and the potential of the human spirit, which she had vowed to protect at all costs.



An overwhelming rage consumes her as she nears the keep of Kath'Kala. Like fire forging steel from the flames of her rage forms the knowledge that she has the power to judge her own and with that power comes a great responsibility.



She is the executioner.
She will put an end to
all that is evil.

This day, one of the
brotherhood must fall.

who seeks audience with
my master and what dost
thou bring in tribute?



DEMACHELUS
YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE ME?
LOOK CLOSER AND YOU WILL
SEE YOUR DOOM.

Strong words
for one so small show
tribute or begone!

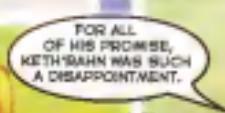
MY BLADE IS
NO TRIBUTE, YOU
SCALY BASTARD!













SOONER OR LATER YOU WILL BE MINE AGAIN... MY SWEET DEVALIA.

Unlike mortal men, there was no salvation for her, but time was on her side. Perhaps somehow she could attain her redemption... After all, she had the time left on earth.

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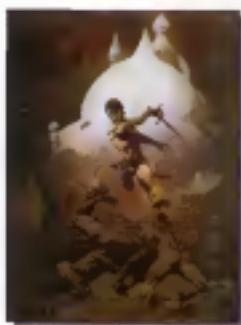
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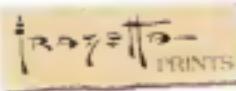


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TODD McFARLANE'S

MONSTERS

II

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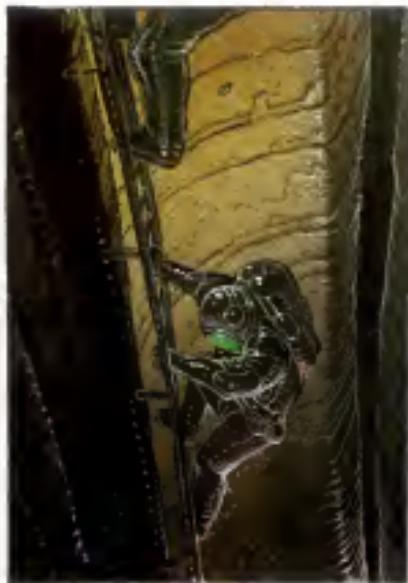


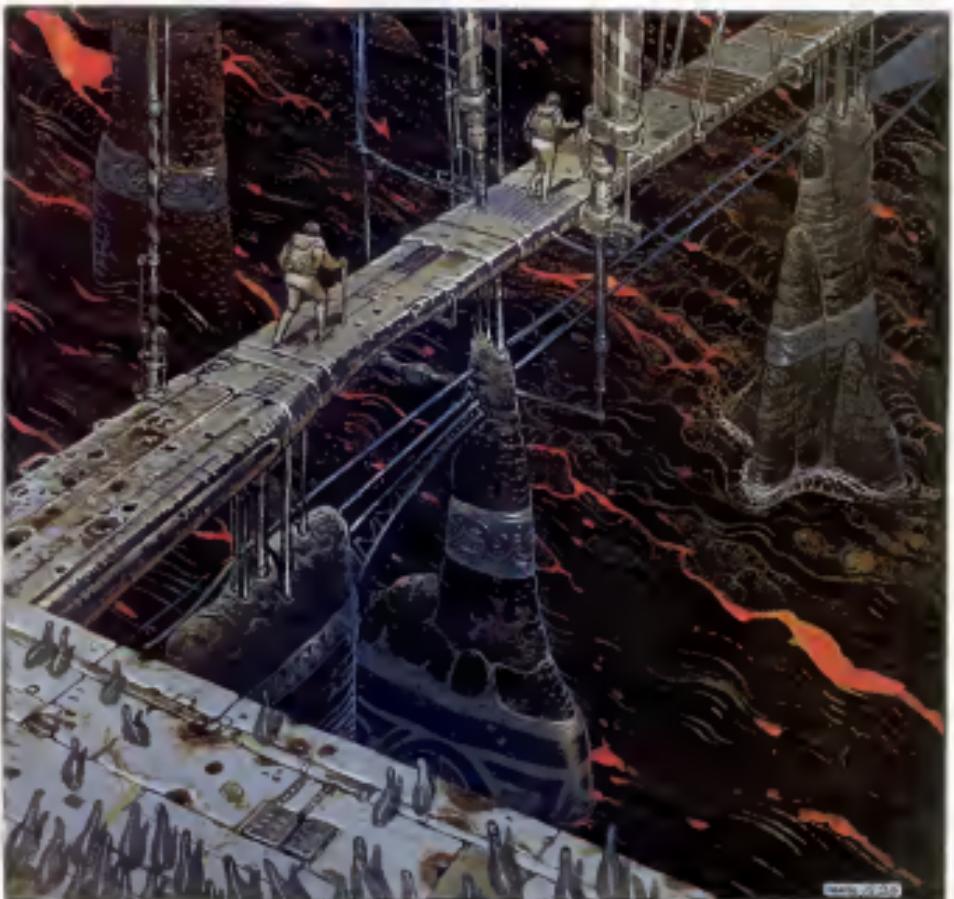
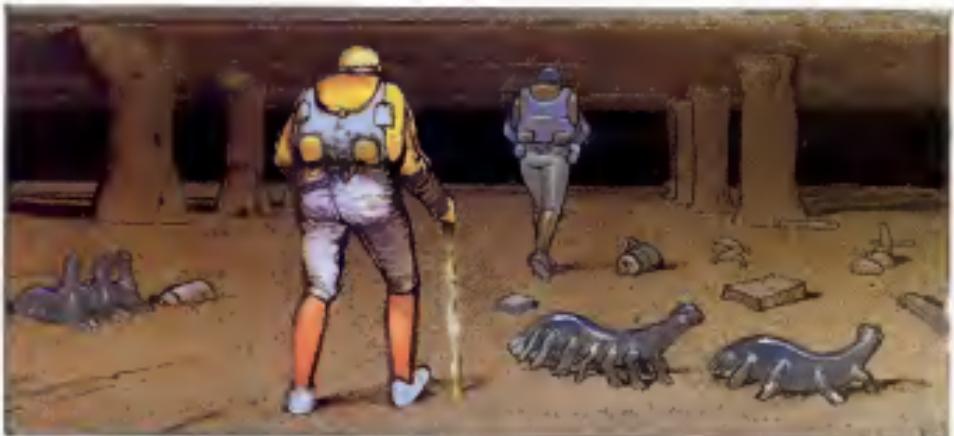
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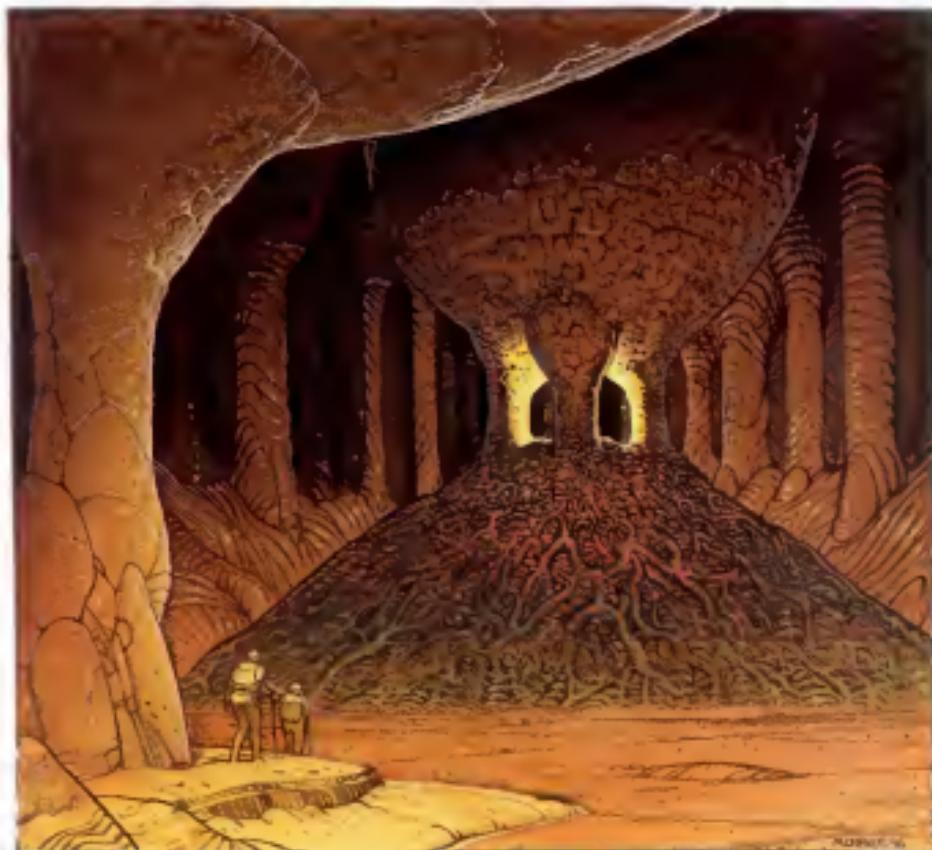
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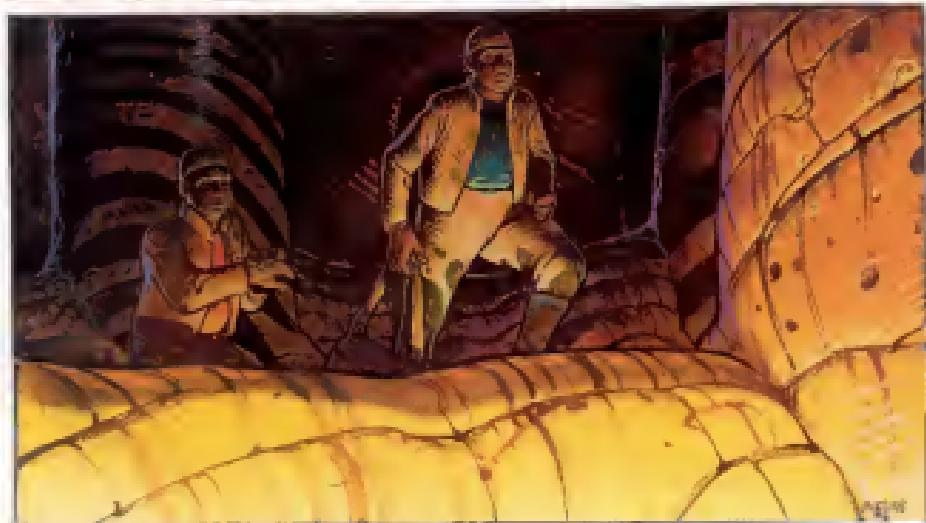
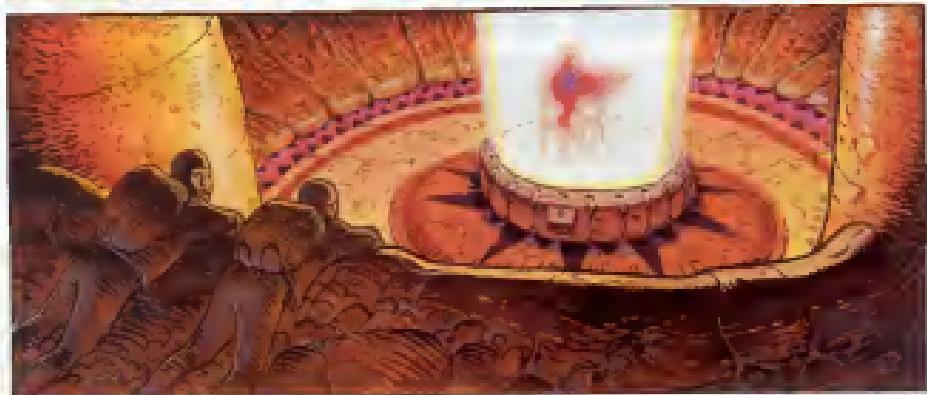
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THE END



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A QUIET
MOMENT...

FEEDERSTU

CUTLAW WARRIOR

GILL

PART-SWIPE
JADE SWALLOW

WHATCHA
READIN'?

HIMZTZ - AN INTERESTING
TEXT ON AVIAN HUNTING
METHODOLOGY - WRITTEN BY
AN ISOBARIAN NATURALIST.
IT IS FILLED WITH THE MOST
FASCINATING OBSERVATIONS -
CARE TO HEAR A FEW?

DUH...
NO, THAT'S
OKAY.

HUMAH

SUMMONING
SACRIFICE

SHHHK
SHHHK
SHHHK

- AND GARRISON
LEGENDARY
ONE-CHOPPAN

GARRISON?
WHATCHA DOIN'
WITH THAT
ROCK?

THIS ROCK
ALLOWS ME TO
CLEANSE IN SWOOS,
DRAWING THE
DARKEST
IMPERFECTIONS
FROM ITS
BLUES.

I WISH J
HAD ONE
OF THOSE
STONES.

— MAYBE IT COULD
GET RID OF ANY
IMPERFECTIONS.
I'M NINN TO THIS
HIND STUFF —
SOMETIMES I
JUST GET
OUT OF PLACE.

GILL IS A DULL STONE
THAT GAINS EDGE AS TIME
PASSES.

GARRISON IS
SOMETHING THAT
CAN'T BE TAUGHT —
AND YOU GULLY ARE
BLESSSED WITH BOTH

REALLY?
WERE YOU ALWAYS
THIS TIDIUM, RIVER
AS A KID?

IT'S NOT ALWAYS.
WHO'S THE TOUGH-
GUY. AS A PARENT,
PALADIN, I'VE BEEN
TRAINED IN ALL FORMS
OF COMMIT —

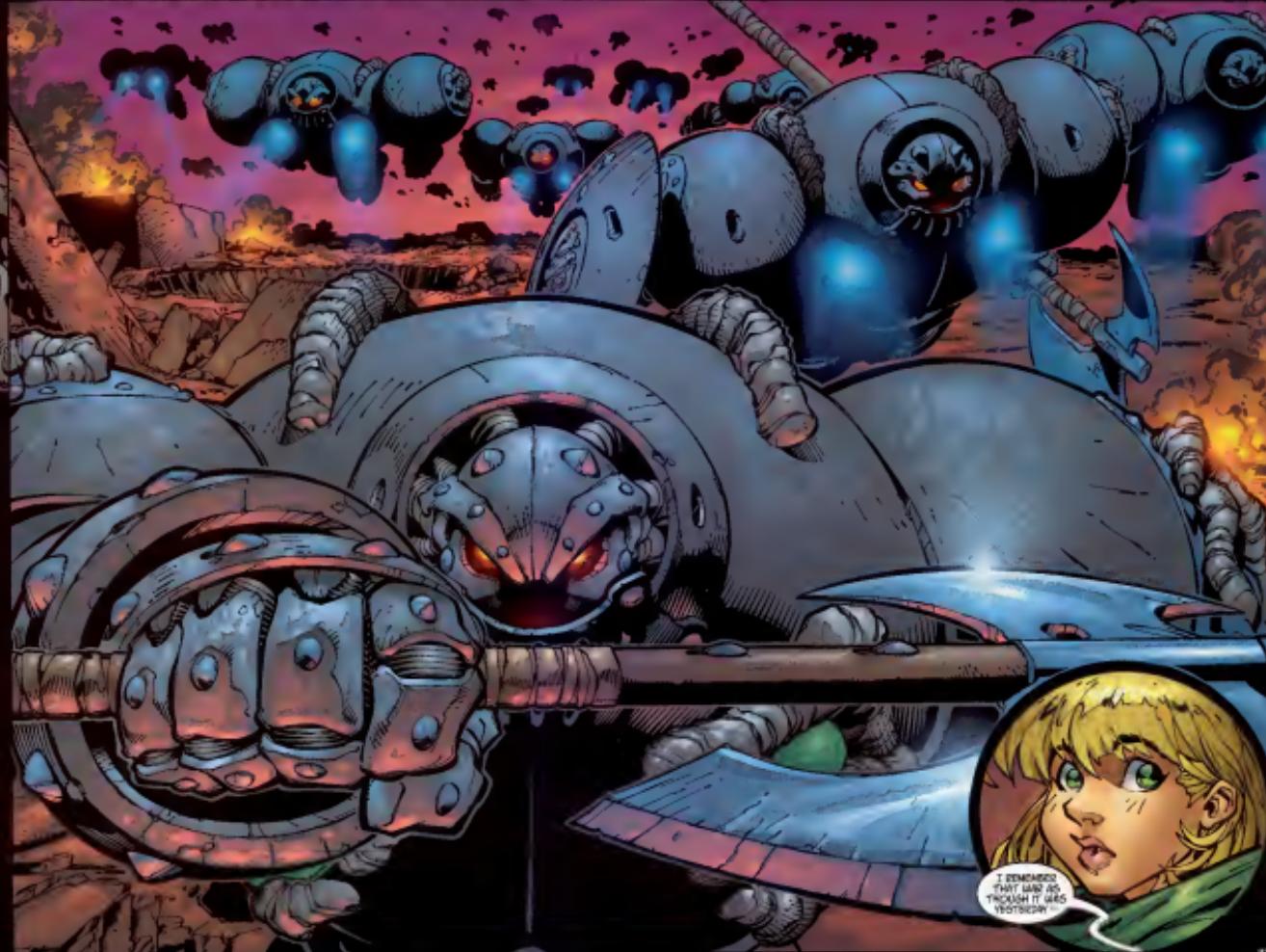


"— AND HAVE ENDURED ENDLESS HOURS OF PHYSICAL AGONY. I DON'T WANT TO GO WITH YOU, BUT WHO IS IN THE CURRICULUM? IN FACT, IT'S BEEN PREDICTED UPON ME, THAT THIS TRAVAIL WHICH HAS TO WAIT DOWN THE LINE, WILL BE SO EASILY OVERCOME BY THE LUNGARIA, DURING OUR BATTLE. CERTAINLY, PREPARATION IS NECESSARY TO PUT IT — SO FAR AS I AM CONCERNED, MY INSTRUCTORS AND MASTERS ARE DOING A FANTASTIC JOB STOPPING THE FIGHT. THE LUNGARIA HAS NOT THE COURAGE WE HAD THOSE DAYS, BUT, I DON'T SAY, BUT A PRINCIPAL INTELLIGENT CREATURE WHICH ACTS WITH GREAT SENSIBILITY. UNANSWERABLE, I WAS RECOMMENDED TO GO ON WITH THE CURRICULUM — BUT THAT DAY I ALSO SAW SOMETHING, TO THIS DAY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT, WHICH WAS MOST CHARMING AND TENDERLY FRIENDLY, SO I DECIDED TO LEAVE. I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT, BUT IT'S IMPORTANT THAT AN ENEMY KNOWS HOW TO FIGHT!"

GOD,
GARRISON — I
STILL HAVE SO MUCH
TO LEARN WHETHER
YOU'RE A HAMBOULET
OR YOU MUST'VE BEEN IN
SOME MAJOR
BATTLES, HUH?

HIBLUZ... YES THIS
IS A SAD STORY,
MY STORY IS FAR
MORE TRAGIC.

MY BRETHREN
AND I WERE
CREATED TO BE
GREAT ENGINES
OF DESTRUCTION -
TO DESTROY THE
THREAT OF INVASION
BY AN ARMY OF
POWERS.
BUT SOON AFTER OUR
VICTORY, THE VERY
PEOPLE WE WERE
DEIGNED TO PROTECT
BEGAN TO TESTOUR
VAST DESTRODUCTIVE
CAPABILITIES. WE
WERE HUNTED
DOWN AND DESTROYED
ON SIGHT. EVERY
LAST ONE OF US.
DRIVEN TO
EXTREMES, WE DEDICATED
NOT FOR KILLING,
BUT FOR KINDNESS IN
OFFERING ME
SHELTER. SO
WE LIVED AND
PERISHED. IN THE
MANY YEARS
FOLLOWING THAT
FATAL DAY, I
HAVE LEARNED
ONE IMPORTANT
LESSON -
THAT DESTROYING
DESTRUCTION IS
A WASTE OF
PRECIOUS LIFE.
ONE MUST REACH
OUT OF HIS
DESTROYED
THIS IS THE CODE
I NOW LIVE BY.



IT REMINDS
ME THAT WAR IS
THROUGH IT WAS
YESTERDAY!



- WE'VE ALL BEEN
THROUGH THE FIRE
SOMETIME, NOT LONGER THAN
OTHERS, BUT NEVER LESS THAN
YEARS AGO, I WOULD SAY.
MORE TIME COULD BE CLOCKED
BUT I DON'T CARE.
I'M TALKING TIME
OF MY LIFE, NOT OF YOURS.
YOU NEVER RECEIVED ANY
SORT OF TRAINING,
HAD ANY SPECIAL TRAINING
IN THE ART OF FIGHTING,
OR BETTER YET, YOU DON'T EVEN
KNOW WHAT IT IS.
IT COULD BE A SORCERER,
OR RIVAL MAIDENS WHO
DRAFTED YOU, OR I
PROVIDED AN MAGIC
TROUBLE ALARM'S HAD
A WAY OF FINDING
ME. YOU DON'T WANT
ME TO GET OUT
THE LACK OF PLAYIN'
TIME GULLY — THE
SHACKLES ARE EIGHT
— YOU'RE SICKENED
AT ME.
YOU COME FROM A



I LOOK AT YOU SOME
THINGS IN YOUR EYES —
I SEE YOU OLD MAN
YOU'VE GOT A LOT
OF SWIM IN
YOU.

THESE IS A REASON HE
WAS CALLED "THE GREAT
ARMANDO" - GUYLAR. THESE
WASN'T A THREAT TOO
GREAT FOR HIM TO FACE.

HE WAS THE MOST
LEVIATHAN HERO IN THE
TERRITORIES - HELL,
THESE WERE THE PLACES
HE MADE A PLACE FOR HIM
HE WANTED TO OWN.

HE CARRIED OUT MOST
OF THESE LAWS WITH HIS
GUN HANDS. THAT POWER,
GUYLAR - THAT LEGACY
HAS BEEN PASSED ON
TO YOU. HOW CAN
YOU POSSIBLY FAIL?



POOKO --
I HATE TO
SAID THE
FEE-S-SOE
CHAT.
BUT --

-- WE'VE GOT
COMPANY!

CALIBRITTO --
I'LL TAKE THIS
POINT. COULD BE
KNOLIN WIND
BACK --

-- IF WE
NEED SOME
MILLION FEE
POWER, FEEL
FREE TO
JUMP IN.

STAND BACK, FATHER. I KNOW YOU'RE
WATCHING -- THIS GAME'S
FOR POOKO!

AND SO,
A QUIET
MOMENT
IS ONCE
AGAIN
BROKEN;
AND A NEW
GENERATION OF

**BATTLE
CHASERS**
IS
BORN!

If you liked the *Battle Chasers* story in this issue, check out

JOE MADUREIRA

BATTLE CHASERS



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THIS JUNE...

FIND OUT WHAT EVERYONE'S
BEEN SCREAMING ABOUT!

FUN! KICK!

EXCITEMENT!

Horror!

Image

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DON'T SAY WE DIDN'T WARN YOU!

TENTH
#10

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The Emerald Seven

Created and written by
Greg Hildebrandt,
Tim Hildebrandt and
Greg Hildebrandt, Jr.
Edited by Glenn Herdling

CAPTAIN! THE
BRAIN'S SHIP IS
GAININ' ON US!
THE SUN'S
ALMOST GONE!
WE'RE LOSIN'
POWER!

KZZAM

THERE GOES
ANOTHER
SOLAR
SAIL!

WE'RE
DEAD
MEAT!!

EEK!
EEK!
EEK!

CHUCK,
GIVE ME THE
TRIFORUM!

HERE,
CAP'N!

THE
FARKIN'
BASTARDS!

SLEECH, FLY THIS
TO COMMANDER BLADE
AT DOCK CITY!

IF THE BRAIN
GETS IT, IT'S
ALL OVER!

EEK!
WE DO,
NOW!

BLAM BLAM

KLANG

KLANG

PIRATE SCOUT!
WE BOARD YOU
NOW!

WE'RE DONE FOR!
WE'RE DONE FOR!

CHACK,
MAN THE
CANNON
CANNON

FIRE
ON MY
COMMAND!

AYE.
AYE,
CAPT!

EEK
EEK

GET
TO DOCK
CITY!
FIND
BLADE!

STICK,
THEY'RE
GOING TO BLOW
US OUTTA
THE SHOT!

COLD
IT, WEIRD!
THEY
AIN'T DOIN'
NUTHIN'!
AT LEAST
NOT TILL THEY
GET THE
TRIFORUM!

WHAT THE FARK ARE YOU GUYS WAITIN' FOR?
LET'S BLAST 'EM!
I WANT MY MONEY!

THAT'S ALL YOU EVER THINK ABOUT. CHOPPER--MONEY!

Nobody gets anything till the TriFordon's safe and sound!

OH JEEPERS! HERE THEY COME!

IN NAME OF OVERLORD BRAIN--THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPONS!

I GIVE THE ORDERS ABOARD THE SHADOW ENFORCER!

HAND OVER, TRIFORDON. YOU STOLE NOWH!

SCREW YOU!
I FOUND IT!
IT'S NOT YOURS!

TALK, TALK, TALK ---

KCHUNK









BABLAMM

WE'RE HIT!

VVVVAAAAAZZZZ ZOOODOOW

SPACE
FOR
IMPACT!

FLOODOSH

ZZZRAAP

KRUMP

SPLASH



CONTINUED...

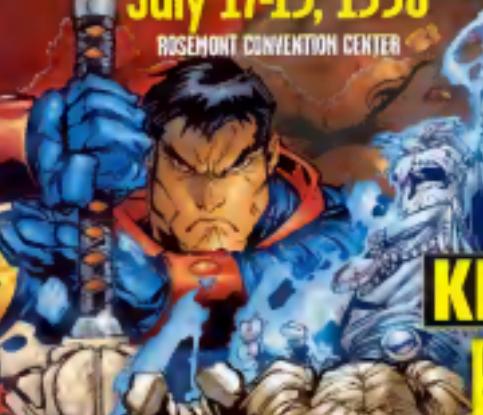
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DEATH, DESTRUCTION, CONQUEST AND POWER:
APHRODISIACS FOR SOME... NECESSITIES FOR THE TRULY EVIL.

I SEE ANY
LORD SHALL
ENJOY THE
SHRELL OF
BATTLE.

DESTROYING
THE ENEMY IN
BATTLE IS INTOKINATING.
YOU OUGHT TO TRY IT
SOME TIME.

CYANIDE,
I ASSUME
YOU'LL FIND
ME THEIR CAPTAIN?

WITHOUT SHAME,
MY LORD.

INFERNUS TERRA

(PART II)

WRITTEN BY PAUL LEONE ART BY ALEX HORLEY

WADING THROUGH THE CARNAGE,
LORD Y'BOZ'S VISCUS BUTCHER
HAS A SINGULAR GOAL IN MIND.

LINHH

THE STENCH OF DEATH PERMEATES THE AIR. YET A FLICKER OF LIFE CANNOT ESCAPE A HARSHADER OF POON.

WHAT
A PITIFUL
EXCUSE FOR
A LEADER.

TO FIND ONE LIVING
AMONGST THE DEAD.

SHREK

PLEASE.
I BEG OF YOU,
IF YOU END MY LIFE
AND SPARE ME MY
CERTAIN AGONY, I
WILL TELL YOU THE
LOCATION OF MY
TREASURE!

PLEASE
END UP OF YOU
SPARE ME MY
CERTAIN AGONY.

COWARD!

...I WILL KNOW YOU
NO COMPASSION. YOUR
LIFE IF YOU'D LIKE TO CALL
IT THAT, IS IN THE HANDS
OF LORD Y'BOZ.

I
HAVE ALL THE
TREASURE I DESIRE.
THANKS TO INSOLENT
IDIOTS LIKE YOURSELF.
YOU SHOULD HAVE
JOINED US WHEN
YOU HAD THE
CHANCE.

IT APPEARS MY
CAT HAS FOUND
THE MOUSE.



A MOUSE HE IS
HE ANGUISH ME TO END
HIS INFERNO LIFE
RATHER THAN
FACE YOU.

A WORK REQUIRING
DEATH IS CERTAINLY
THE MORE PALATABLE
CHOICE.

TAKE HIM BACK TO THE
CAMP. IF HE SURVIVES THE
INTERROGATION, INTRODUCE
HIM TO HIS FELLOW
SLAVES.



CYRUS...
JOIN ME FOR
A MOMENT.

I WANT
YOU TO BE AT MY
BARRACKS TOMORROW. OUR
TANK IS NEVER COMPUTED.
DO YOU THINK THEY HAVE
ANY GEAR?



PERHAPS A FEW
INVESTIGATED INDIVIDUALS
HAVE NOTICED OUR ACTIVITY...
BUT THEIR THEORIES WILL BE
DISPROVED AS LUNACY.



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FOR YEARS MAN HAS CONCENTRATED HIS EFFORTS SEARCHING THE HEAVENS FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE.

SOMETIMES WHAT WE ARE SEARCHING FOR IS RIGHT BELOW OUR NOSE.

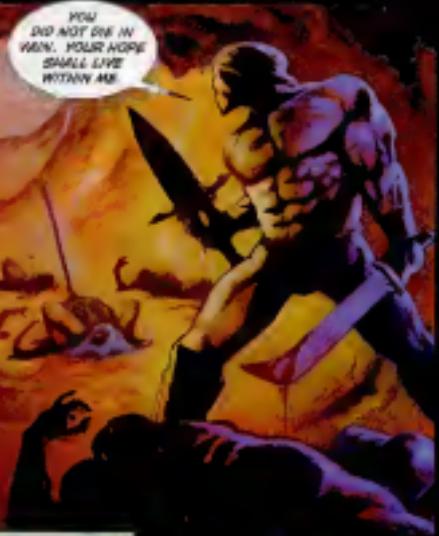








THE YOUNG WARRIOR FIGHTS WELL. THE SPIRIT OF
THE OLD MAN BURGES NOW WITHIN HIM.



THOUSANDS OF STEPS BECKON THE
LONG ASCENT TO SALVATION BEGINS



SUNLIGHT STREAMS ACROSS THE YOUNG
WARRIOR'S BODY. INVIGORATED WITH RENEWED
HOPE, HE APPROACHES ANOTHER WORLD

OUR WORLD WELCOMES A NEW VISITOR



TO BE CONTINUED
NEXT ISSUE!

FANTASTIC ART From MORPHEUS!

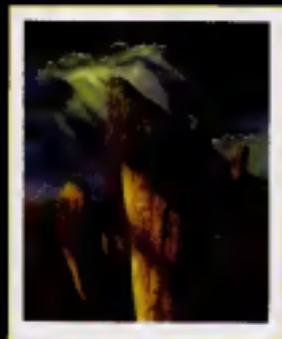


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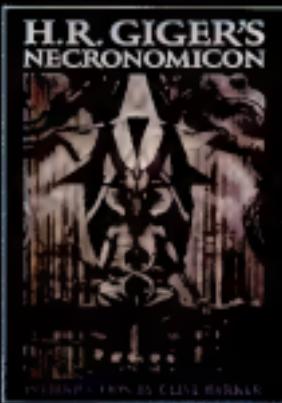


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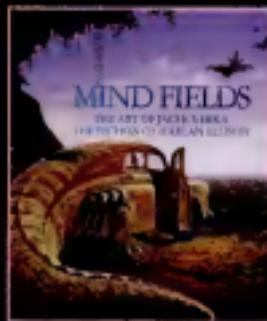


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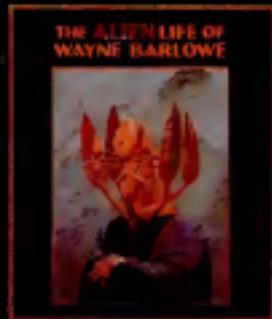


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FEBRUARY 2060,
TOKYO 2200 P.M.

SpaceJackers

WRITTEN BY JEFF LEONE
ART BY TOM GRONBERG
COLORS BY BRAD WANGSTAD

A NEW HOVERCAR
DEALERSHIP IN THE
HEART OF THE CITY.

ステルスゴード
STEALTH GORD

THE AEROMOTORS
HOVERCARS
WITH ROYAL AVIATION

ONE CONSPIRATOR
AND PLEASED MAMON
FOR EONS.

THERE ARE THOSE THAT HAVE
AND THOSE THAT HAVE NOT.

HEY KID,
YOU'VE GOT TO
BE OLD ENOUGH
TO FLY ONE TO
BUY ONE.

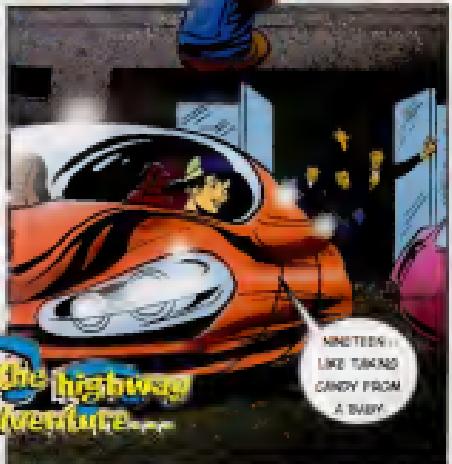
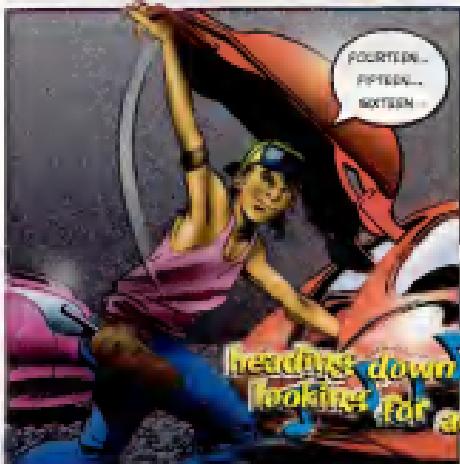
I'M NOT
ARMED, BUT
I MIGHT BE
FLYING!

ENTERPRISING INDIVIDUALS
FIND A WAY TO HAVE

SCREAM AND
WHEN I CALL
THE COPS

SURE THING
SUICIDE

THE RISKS GREAT
THE REWARDS MORE THAN MOST
ADULTS WILL MAKE IN A COUPLE MONTHS.





FLASHY ARMANI SUIT, FANCY FEDORA, A GUN, JUST FOR EFFECT...HONG LIKES TO STAY CLEAN. HIS KIDS DO THE DIRTY WORK, AS THERE ARE NO CHILD LABOR LAWS PERTAINING TO THIEF AS A PROFESSION.

ANAL JOSEPHSON COME IN.

COME TO SEE THE REPLAY?

AND FINALLY,
I'VE SEEN
MYSELF PLenty
OF TIMES

HERE YOU
ARE LITTLE ONE.
LEAVE US
NOW!

HONG'S EXTENSIVE ARSENAL OF UNDETECTABLE SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT THROUGHOUT THE CITY ALLOWS HIM TO KEEP A TIGHT REIN ON HIS EMPLOYEES AND A WATCHFUL EYE ON HIS COMPETITION.

HAVE A SEAT.
JOSÉPH, YOU'RE THE
BEST I HAVE—
MY PROTEGE'

I MIGHT SAY THOUGH
YOUR AGE IS BEGINNING
TO COMPROMISE YOUR
ANONYMITY

YOU'VE BEEN HEARD
WILLIAMSON TO ME...WORKS
LIKE A SON TO HUN ONE OF
MY THIEVES. BUT, IT
IS TIME FOR YOU TO
MOVE ON.

NOW SOT

IT SEEMS MOSURE
BECOMING A MINOR
CELEBRITY WITH THE
LOCAL POLICE.

BUT WHAT?
WILL I POP?

YOU ARE VERY
RESOURCEFUL, AND THIS
SHALL GIVE YOU A
HEAD START!

FEBRUARY 2086. 20 YEARS LATER - SOMEWHERE IN THE ALTOONA GALAXY JORDAN HAS FOUND A NEW METHOD OF SUPPORTING HIMSELF.

UNTIL ABOUT 20 YEARS AGO THE METHODS OF SPACE TRAVEL WERE RELATIVELY FUNDAMENTAL AND SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

"TIME IS MONEY", AS THEY SAY IN BUSINESS AND THE RACE WAS ON TO SYNTHESIZE THE PERFECT FUEL AND DEVELOP THE FAIREST ENGINES REDUCING TRANSPORT TIME FOR INTERPLANETARY COMMERCIAL BY A FEW DAYS REALIZED FORTUNES FOR THE SHIPPING CONGLOMERATES.

A LONELY PLANET IN A DILAPIDATED SECTOR HARBORED THE SOLUTION - AND AN AMBITIOUS MAN FROM EARTH HAD THE ANSWERS.

I HOPE WE'RE NOT RISKING OUR SHIPS ON A TANKER FULL OF BITCH JUICE AGAIN.

JODI ASSURED ME THAT THIS CARGO WILL BE WORTH IT. I'D RATHER IF IT'S NOT WHAT I THINK IT IS, I'LL HAVE HIS HEAD.

THIS IS A CARGO VESSEL PROTECTED BY THE LEAGUE OF PLANETS. STATE YOUR INTENTIONS IMMEDIATELY.

DO NOT RESIST AND WE WILL SPARE YOUR LIVES.

YOU HAVE SOMETHING WE WANT.

WHY ARE THEIR WEAPONS DISABLED?

THEIR OUTER WEAPONS WILL BE OUT FOR FIVE MINUTES. I PACIFY THEIR CANNONS WITH THE NITROUS GRENADES - WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE FAST.







PLANET WILLOW... OUTLAW
PLANET IN THE OZONE GALAXY.

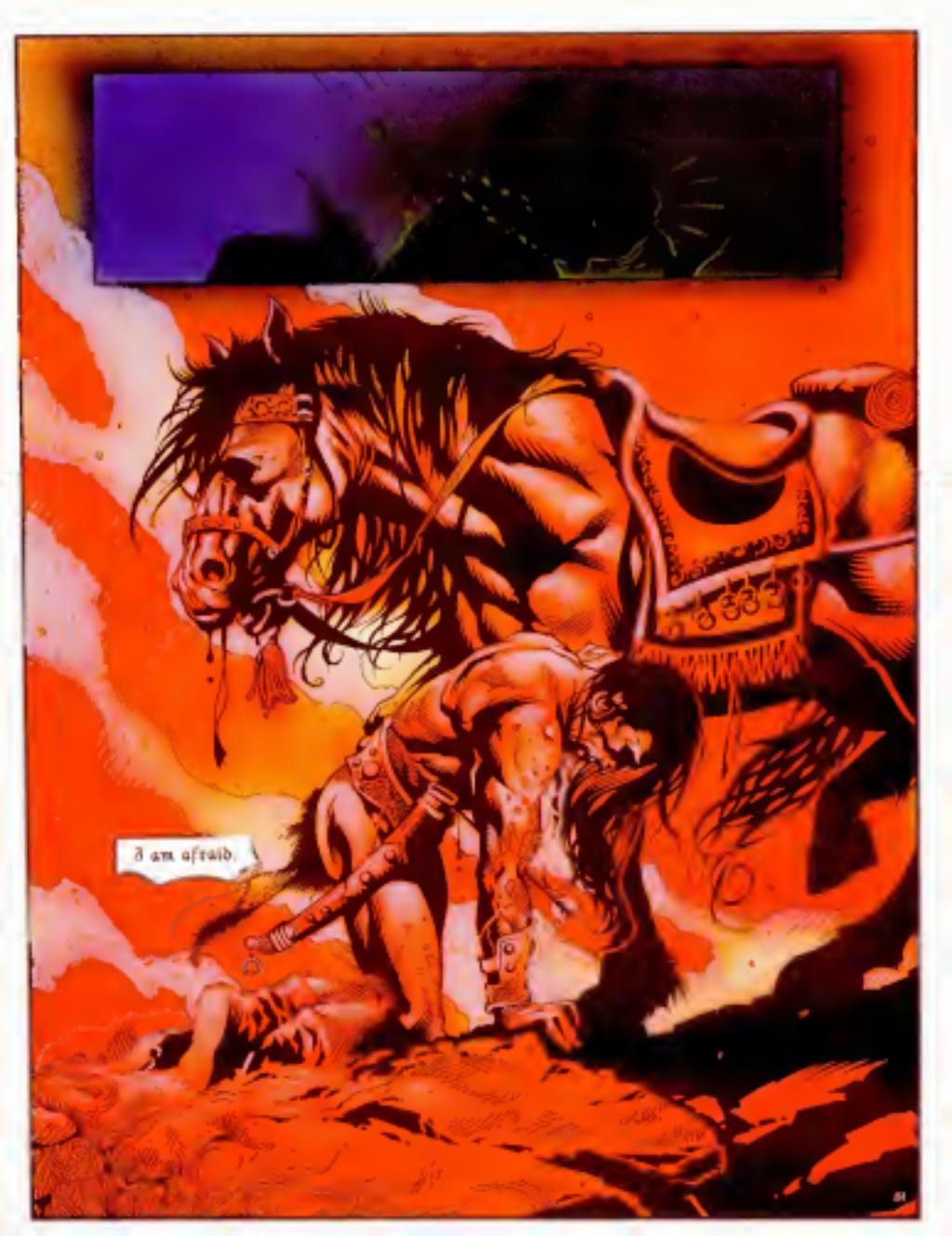


BLACK MARKETTEERS HAVE BECOME
SLIGHTLY MORE ADVANCED





A
TOM HARRIS **PLACE** RAY STUBBER
OF
DYING



A woman with dark hair and a determined expression is kneeling on a rocky, orange-red ground. She wears a loincloth and a belt with a large circular buckle. A sword is strapped to her back. In front of her is a large, dark horse with a ornate bridle and a tassel hanging from its chin. The horse's mane is wild and dark. The background is filled with swirling flames and smoke, suggesting a volcanic or apocalyptic setting. In the upper right corner, there is a small, dark rectangular inset showing a close-up of a face with a single tear falling.

I am afraid.

Can I go to my home
and tell my wife I cannot
master my fear?



A would rather cut the tongue
from my mouth than to
speak those words



A man in a dark military-style uniform with a plumed hat looks upwards in awe. He is positioned in the lower-left foreground. In the upper right, a figure in a golden-yellow robe with intricate patterns and a tall, pointed hat stands with arms raised, emitting a bright light. The background is a fiery, orange-red sky with wispy clouds. The overall mood is one of reverence or awe.

My fear is a simple one.
A fear of peace,
of being idle after the
wars have stopped.



Dying an old, bitter wretch
spouting grand tales of war and
blood.
Rivers of it.
Dying that way is not for me...
A warrior.



There are many ways and
places to die.

This place.

Here.

Now

It was good enough for my father
and my father's fathers.



But they are all gone.



And I am alone.



CARNIVORES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

(An Excerpt)

By Alan Dean Foster

Art by Keith Parkinson

To be published by Warner Aspect in June 1998



IT WAS THE MORNING AFTER THE SENSUOUS SECOND FULL MOON OF Telengara, which heralds the coming of the spring rains, when little Cola came running into the village to cry that there were dead people washing up on the beach. And not just dead people, but people of unnatural aspect attired in strange clothes, whose pale faces were unmarked by usual scars yet sometimes overgrown with hair.

Most of the village was not yet awake when the frantic boy came running and shrieking past the houses. At first his mother thought it was a trick. She caught him and shook him, angry that he should disturb everyone's morning for the sake of a joke. Then she saw something that, like a piece of grit, had become caught at the bottom of his eyes, and stopped shaking him. Together they hurried to the house of the chief.

Asab was just emerging as they arrived. He hurried to adjust his fine mesa-skin cloak with the impressive dark blue stripes and the phophilam headdress with its sweeping crest of intense red and yellow feathers. He was clearly upset at having been roused from his sleep before normal cockcrow. Hastily donned, his headdress kept threatening to slip from his head.

"I saw them, I saw them!" In addition to Asab, a crowd had begun to gather around Cola and his mother as the boy declaimed breathlessly.

"Now, child," the chief intoned solemnly, "what is it you think you have seen?" Other men and a few of the women clustered close, rubbing sleep from their eyes

while fighting back the sour morning taste of recent dreams.

"Dead people, Chief Asab! Many of them, very different from us." The boy barely paused for air as he turned and pointed. "On the beach above where the mussels and the tyrex shells grow!"

Sleepy faces glistening with a reluctance to believe turned to the tall, lanky head of the village. Asab briefly considered the child's harangue before finally frowning down at the anxious, panting youth.

"We will go and see. And for your sake, boy, there had better be something on the sand besides shells and dried sea noodles!"

While barren of all vegetation save a little grass and a few handy weeds, the beach was not devoid of wood. Gigantic logs cast ashore by the cold Samona Current littered the sand and protruded from rocky outcroppings where they had been hurled by violent storms. Interspersed among the unbranched, well-traveled forest giants were the whitening bones of demised sea creatures large and small: whales and serpents, birds and batwings, fish and stoneaters. From such bountiful detritus did the villagers recycle useful materials for their homes and barns.

"There!" Cola pointed, but the gesture was unnecessary. Everyone saw the hungry dragonets circling over the spot.

There were a dozen or more of the little black scavengers. Wings folded, another four or five sat on the sand picking at irregular lumps that on closer inspection resolved themselves into perhaps a dozen human figures. Ululating and waving their spears as they

approached, the villagers frightened the carrion-eaters away. Hissing their displeasure, the raven dragonets rose into the transparent air on noisome, membranous wings, content for now to circle slowly overhead. They would wait.

Truth to tell, if anything Cola had understated the matter. The bodies were more than passing strange. Just as he had claimed, several showed faces mantled with hair, mostly black or brown but some as yellow as the gold that Morris the Trader brought from the far southern mountains. The figures were clad in an excessive amount of clothing, all of it dyed oversbright and some fashioned of cloth so fine it was soft as a little girl's tears.

On top of this barbaric display of color most also wore armor of heavy cured leather of a type unknown to Asab or any of the other village warriors. Scenes that showed men fighting with one another and strange animals and buildings were deeply embossed on breastplates and leggings. With so much weight to carry it was a wonder that any of them had been washed ashore.

Asab and two of his best warriors knelt beside one man. With one exception, all the bodies on the beach were shorter and stockier than the average villager. They were also exclusively male.

"See," Tucarak ran a finger along the dead man's exposed cheek. It was cold with the damp of the sea and infused with death. "How smooth the skin is. How untouched." With his other hand he traced the curving scar, a sign of manhood, that decorated his own cheek.

"And how pale," added a dis-

approving Houlamu as he rose "Who are these men, and where do they come from?" Raising his gaze, he squinted out to sea Nothing was to be seen save the dark, chill water, not even a hulking cloud There were only the endlessly rolling waves and the amazingly homogeneous deep blue of the morning sky.

"Well, they are dead, and I am sure they would not want their dying to be wasted" With that Asab ceremoniously began the salvaging of the deceased's belongings, beginning with their curious apparel and assiduously examining every bulge and pocket for anything, however foreign and exotic, that might prove useful to the village

"Can we safely eat them, do you suppose?" Tucanak held a blood-and-salt-water-soaked shirt up to the sun "They look like men So they should taste like men."

"Ho-yah," agreed Asab "We will let old Flinstail try a bit of leg She will eat anything" The chief chuckled softly "If it does not kill her, we will know it is safe for the rest of us"

Houlamu contemplated the proposed dismemberment with distaste "You can eat them if you wish I only eat what I know Or who I know" He nudged another of the limp bodies roughly with the butt of his spear

"These are plumper folk than the Kogi or the Nalamites" As he spoke, Tucanak was tugging hard on the corpse's unusual footgear It was much too awkward and heavy to be worn on Naumkib feet, of course, but cut into pieces it might provide the makings for a couple of pairs of serviceable sandals "If anything, I would think

they would taste better than our neighbors"

While the chief and his warriors debated the deceased visitors' suitability for the cooking pot, other members of the tribe wandered up and down the waterline in search of other bodies Among the searchers was a particularly tall warrior, tall even for a Naumkib, whose somber aspect was the subject of much good-natured gibing among his peers In response to the frequent jokes made at his expense, Ejole would always smile tolerantly and nod He was not one to spoil the fun of his hunting companions even when he was the butt of their entertainment

"Help... me..."

The words were barely audible, and for a moment Ejole Ebomba thought they were only subtle distortions of the surf-music, sprinkled upon his innocent ears like wind-blown foam Having paused momentarily, he started to resume his walk, convinced he had heard nothing

"Please... by whatever god you pray to... help me..."

Not foam, not wind, but the dying utterances of a man very like himself Halting, Ebomba looked northward along the shore with a tracker's experienced eyes, sweeping the rocks and sand for signs of life Eventually, he found it—or what was left of it

The man was younger than himself, sturdily built, and clad in the most elaborate garments anyone had yet seen on the bodies on the beach His fine leather armor extended down to cover his upper arms and legs, but it had not been enough to preserve him There was a great hole in his right side, through which glistening red

flesh and pale white bone were clearly visible Ebomba wondered how he had survived even this long with so deep a wound It was ragged around the edges, clear evidence of a bite Whatever had done it had bitten clean through the thick, tough armor A big shark might have made such a wound, he knew There were many sharks in the waters offshore from the village Yes, it might have been a shark—or something else

The man's hair was straight, shoulder length, and golden Very different from the thick braids that were bound up in a tight bunch at the back of Ebomba's neck He marveled at the wispy strands Leaning forward, he wiped sea slime and sand from the pallid face At his kindly touch, the other's eyes opened They were a delicate, diluted blue, but not yet entirely dimmed, and they focused immediately on him

"You... who are...?"

"I am Ejole Ebomba, of the tribe of Naumkib You and many others have been cast ashore on the beach below our village Your companions are all dead" His gaze flicked briefly over the cavity in the younger man's torso "You are dying too I know a little medicine, but not enough to help you Not even the old wise women of the village could help what I see It is too late"

The stranger's reaction was not what Ebomba expected The man's eyes grew suddenly, shockingly wide Reaching up, he clutched the taller man's wool overshirt and used it to pull his ruined, bleeding upper body off the sand until his face was only a foot away from that of his finder

In light of the terrible injury he had suffered, the effect of will required to accomplish that feat was nothing short of astonishing.

Staring straight into Ebomba's eyes, he hissed in his odd, uneven accent, "You must save her!"

"Save her? Save who?" Ebomba's bewilderment was absolute.

"Her! The Visioness Themaryl of Laonda!" Remarkably, and with what invisible reserves of strength one could only imagine, the man was shaking Ebomba by the front of his overshirt.

"I do not know of what, or of whom, you speak," the herder responded gently.

Exhausted by this ultimate physical exertion, the wounded stranger collapsed back on the sand. He was breathing more slowly now, and Ebomba could sense Death advancing fluidly across the surf, choosing as its avenue of approach, as it so often did, its friend the sea.

"Know that I am Tarin Beckwith, son of Bewaryn Beckwith, Count of Laonda North. The Visioness Themaryl was my countess, or my countess-to-be, until she was carried off by that pestilence that walks like a man and calls itself Hymneth the Possessed Many"—he coughed raggedly, and blood spilled from his lips as from an overfull cup—"many of the sons and masters of the noble houses of Greater Laonda took a solemn oath never to rest until she was returned to us and her abductor punished. To my knowledge, I and my men were the only ones to track the monster's ship this far." He paused, wheezing softly, praying for breath enough to continue.

"There was a battle this morn-

ing, on the sea. My men fought valiantly. But Hymneth is in league with the evils of otherness. He covets with them, delights in their company, and calls upon them to help defend his miserable self. Against such foulness and depravity even brave men cannot always stand." Once more the watery blue eyes, the life fading from them, fastened on Ebomba's own. "I pass on the covenant to you, whoever you are. I charge you, on the departure of my soul, to save the innocent Themaryl and to restore her to the people of Laonda. With her abduction, the heart has gone out of that land, and all who dwell within it. Tarin Beckwith, place this on you."

Ebomba shook his head slowly as he gazed down at the stranger. "I am but a simple herder of cattle and harvester of fish, Tarin Beckwith." He gestured with the tip of his spear. "And this is a poor man's land, spare of people and resources. Not a place in which to raise armies. I would not even know which way to begin searching."

Raising himself off the sand with a second tremendous effort, Beckwith turned slightly at the waist and pointed Sunlight glistened off his visible intestines. "To the northwest, across the sea. There! Having defeated the only ones capable of following him, Hymneth the depraved will feel safe in returning now to his home. I am told it lies in the fabled land of Ehi-Larne, which is far to the west of Laonda. Seek him there, or find another who will." Once more, clenching hands clawed at Ebomba's simple attire. "You must do this, or the innocent Themaryl will be forever lost!"

"You expect too much of me, stranger Beckwith. I have a family, and cattle to watch over and protect, and—"

Ebomba halted in midsentence. His encumbrance delivered, the life force spent, the spirit of Tann Beckwith of Laonda had at last fled his body. Gently but firmly, Ebomba disengaged the insensible fingers from his shirt and laid the upper part of the destroyed body down upon the cool sand. It lay there, teal blue eyes staring blankly at the sky, as the herdsman rose.

It would be a privilege, he knew, to consume a chop cut from the flank of so brave and dedicated a man. When the time came for the sharing out of the food, he would make a point of making this claim to Asah.

As to the dead man's trust, there was nothing he could do about it, of course. He had spoken him the truth. There were family and herd and village responsibilities to look after. What matter to him the troubles and tribulations of a people from far away, or the carrying off of one woman?

Sureh and Deloog came running over. They were young men, not yet acknowledged elders, and they nodded to him respectfully as they knelt by the now motionless form at his feet. There was excitement in their voices, and their eyes were alight with the pleasure to be found in something new.

"Ejole, you found this one, but you do not take his belongings." Sureh eyed him uncertainly while Deloog gazed at the heavily embossed leather armor, openly covetous.

"No. I have no interest in such

things. They are yours if you want them."

Elated at their good fortune, the two youths began to strip the body of useful material. As he yanked on a pants leg, Deloog watched the taller, older man curiously.

"These are fine things, Ejole. Why do you not take them?"

"I have been given something else, Deloog. Something I did not ask for and do not want, and I am not sure what to do with it."

The youths exchanged a glance. Ehomba was known for sitting and saying nothing for long periods of time, even when he was not guarding the herds. A peculiar man, for certain, but kindly and always helpful. The boys and girls of the village, and not a few of their parents, thought him peculiar, but nice enough in his own quiet fashion.

So the two young men did not make fun of him behind his back as he walked away from them, up the beach toward a point of rocks. Besides, they were too excited by their booty.

Working his way up onto the rocks, Ehomba found a flat, dry place and sat down, positioning his spear in the crook of his right arm and resting his chin on his crossed forearms. Small waves broke themselves against the cool, gray stone. Farther up the coast, seals and merapees played in the surf, occasionally hauling out to dry themselves on the sun-warmed beach. The merapees would crack clams and abalone to share with the seals, who did not have the benefit of hands with which to manipulate rocks.

Out there, somewhere, lay lands so distant he had never heard of them, exotic and alien. A

place by the name of Lacondas, and another called Ehl-Larimae. A woman being taken from one to the other against her will. A woman many men were willing to die for.

Well, he already had a woman worth dying for, and two children growing up strong and healthy. Also cattle, and a few sheep, and the respect of his contemporaries. Who was he to go searching across half a world or more on behalf of people he did not know and who would probably laugh at his untutored ways and plain clothes if they saw him?

But a brave and noble man had charged him with the duty as he lay dying. As it always did, the sight of the sea and the waves soothed Ejole. Yet he remained much troubled in mind.

Half the day was done when finally he rose and started back to the village. All the bodies had been removed from the beach, leaving only the dark stains of blood to show where they had lain. Come high tide, the sea would cleanse the sand, as it cleansed everything else it touched.

That night there was a solemn feast in honor of the strangers who had died on the shore below the village. Everyone partook of the cooking, and it was agreed without dispute that wherever they had come from, it was a land of plenty, for their flesh was sweet and uncorrupted. As he ate of Tarin Beckwith, Ehomba pondered the unfortunate man's final words until those around him could no longer ignore his deep concern. Not wishing to lay his melancholy on them, he excused himself from the company of his

wife and their friends, and sought out old Phastal.

He found her by herself off to one side of the central firepit, sitting cross-legged against a tired tree while chewing with some difficulty on the remnants of a calf. Though white as salt, her hair was fastened in neat braids that spilled down her back, and she had decked herself out for the evening in her finest beads and long strips of colored leather. She looked up at him out of her one good eye and smiled crookedly. The other eye, blinded in youth, gleamed chalky as milk. Given her few remaining teeth, it was no wonder she was finding the meat tough going.

"Ejole! Come and sit with an old woman and we'll give the young girls something to gossip about tomorrow!" Her grin fell away as she saw that his expression was even more serious than usual. "You are troubled, boy. It clouds your face like smoke."

Crossing his own legs beneath him, he sat down beside her, waving off her offer of meat, smiled squash, or bread. "I need your wisdom and your advice, Phastal, not your food."

Nodding understandingly, she picked at a strip of gristle caught between her remaining back teeth as she listened to him tell of his encounter with the dying stranger on the beach. When he had finished, she sat silent in contemplation for a long moment.

"The stranger placed this burden on you as he lay dying?" When Ehomba nodded, she responded with a terse grunt. "Then you have no choice." Idly she fingered the lightly browned slices of squash in her bowl. "Are

you or are you not a man of conviction?"

"You know that I am, old woman."

"Yes, I do. So we both know what this means. You must finish this man's work. One who dies in another's arms is no longer a stranger. Like it or not, he bound himself to you, and in so doing, his mission was bound to you as well."

The man seated across from her sighed heavily. "That is also how I interpreted what happened, and it is what I feared. But what can I do? I am only one. This Tann Beckwith had many warriors with him, and they were not enough to save him or allow him to succeed."

Fhastal sat a little straighter. "They were not Niiumkib. They were from outside the stable world."

He was not persuaded. "They were still men. That is all that I am."

"No it is not." A gnarled fist the color of spoiled leather punched him several times in the upper arm. "You are Eyoie Ehomba, herder, fisherman, father, warrior, and tracker. The best tracker in the village. Can you not track that which is not seen as well as that which is?"

"That is not so great a skill. Tucarak can do it, and so can Jeloba."

"But not as good as you, boy. You know that you must do this thing!"

"Yes, yes. Because this Tann Beckwith, whom I do not know, put it on me as he died. This is not fair, Fhastal."

She snorted, her nose twitching. "Fate rarely is. If you want

me to, I will explain it to Mirhanga."

"No." He uncrossed his legs preparatory to rising. "I am her husband, and it is my responsibility I will tell her. She will not take it well."

"Mirhanga is a good woman. Give her more credit. She understands honor and obligation." She fumbled a slice of fried pumpkin into her mouth. "How old is your boy?"

"Daki will be fourteen years next month."

Fhastal nodded approvingly. "Old enough to do a nun or two looking after the herd in your stead. Time he started doing something useful. The little girl will have a harder time accepting this, but her tears will pass." Reaching down, she removed one of the many colorful fetishes that hung in bunches around her neck. It was a fine carving of a woman, done in the shiny gray horn of a steleghub. As he leaned forward, she slipped the cord from which it hung over his head.

"There! Now I can go with you. I have seen the Unstable Lands in my dreams, and now I can travel with you to see them in person."

He smiled fondly as he studied the figurine hanging from its cord of sisal fiber. "You mean that this image can go with me."

"Ob no, big handsome!" She giggled gleefully. "It is the image you are speaking to right now, the image that the village children make fun of and call names behind my back." She pointed to the necklace. "That is the real me."

For just an instant, he thought he saw something in her blind eye. Something flickering, and

alive. But it was only a trick of the weak light, distorted by the cook fire.

"I will carry it as an amulet," he assured her, not wanting to hurt her feelings. Fhastal meant well, but she was a little crazy. "So that it will bring me luck."

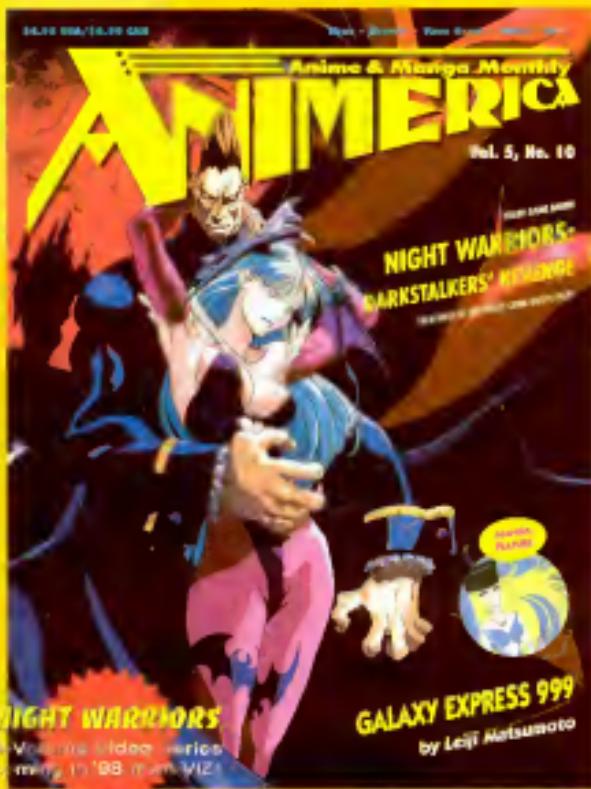
"If you'd carry it somewhere else on your body, it might bring me luck." She laughed merrily again. "I hope that it will, Eyoie." She made shooing motions at him, like a mother hen guiding one of her brood of chicks. "Now then—go and see to your wife, so that you may lie with her before you leave. Make your farewells to your children. And be sure to stop by Likulu's house. She and the other women will gather some small things to give you to take on your journey. Meet me tomorrow by the stone lightning and I will set you on your way. I can do no more than that."

He straightened. "Thank you, Fhastal. With luck, I may be able to return this woman to her people and return home in a month or two."

He did not believe it as he spoke it, but that did not matter. Fhastal did not believe it either. Without discussion, they chose to connive in the illusion.

End of Part 1

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